

Adobe has taken an active role in developing accessibility standards for digital content. As a member of the W3C, the company is part of the Web Accessibility Initiative (WAI), and the W3C committee for Scalable Vector Graphics (SVG). In addition to helping set the standards, Adobe has been offering accessibility solutions since 1997, when it introduced the [access.adobe.com](http://access.adobe.com) web site offering free services that convert Adobe PDF files into HTML or plain text for easy interpretation by assistive technologies.

Adobe Acrobat 5.0, released earlier this year, represents a major step forward in Adobe's on-going efforts to improve the accessibility of both Acrobat software and the information contained in Adobe PDF files. Acrobat 5.0 includes a host of features and capabilities that enhance the usability of the application for users with a broad range of disabilities and help users create Adobe PDF documents that are more accessible to people with disabilities. Some of the new features include: support for screen readers, high-contrast color schemes, reflowable text blocks, a broad range of keyboard shortcuts, tagged Adobe PDFs, and a Make Accessible plug-in for Windows.

Adobe has been proactive in addressing accessibility on many fronts. However, being an advocate for user-centered design, it seems the next step should be to identify and incorporate more user research in this strategy. Last year an internal research team was created to focus on the usability of Adobe products. To date, we have not implemented any specific plans for accessibility evaluation. However, it is essential that we develop a strategy and methodologies that will be effective in evaluating both the products themselves as well as the content they produce, as has been done with Acrobat 5.

The focus up to this point has been on adhering to the common standards that have been developed. We hope to compliment these initial efforts with increased user participation and testing. There are many different types of research that could be beneficial -- from broad workflow research to specific task-based studies. There is also potential to leverage our research sponsorship of the Center for Speech and Language and Information at Stanford University to incorporate testing of our products with new assistive technologies.

Adobe is in a unique position with respect to accessibility, as we are involved with the issues from many perspectives. Our accessibility strategy must address not only our software products themselves, but also the content they produce as well as our own web-based applications and interfaces. As a member of the User Research Team at Adobe, there is a great challenge to develop an effective means to evaluate the accessibility in all of these domains.